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TAGS: PHUM EC
SUBJECT: RAISING AWARENESS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN ECUADOR

¶1. (U) Summary: As part of the American Embassy's outreach program, five embassy summer interns traveled on July 30, 2007 to a shelter for trafficking victims run by La Fundacion Nuestros Jovenes in Mitad del Mundo, and on August 1 & 2, 2007 to Casa Condor Community Center in Riobamba, to promote awareness of trafficking in persons. The trips served to educate the interns and reinforce Embassy ties with a shelter for trafficking victims near Quito and with indigenous youth in the Chimborazo region. The events were well received by over 70 people, who expressed gratitude for the visit and presentation. End summary.

La Fundacion Nuestros Jovenes

¶2. (U) La Fundacion Nuestros Jovenes is an organization which helps trafficking victims rehabilitate and eventually integrate into society after rescue. Embassy Quito interns visited this organization with a local Peace Corps Volunteer to learn more about human trafficking in Ecuador. The Nuestros Jovenes shelter included spacious living accommodations and an outdoor greenhouse for growing vegetables. The facilities needed improvement, however, and the staff expressed a need for funding. The majority of the shelter's funding comes from community donations, as the Ecuadorian government provides no funding. The shelter currently houses thirteen women, in almost all cases victims of sexual exploitation as a result of human trafficking. Of the thirteen women, ten have children that also housed in the shelter.

¶3. (U) Throughout the shelter's history, the large majority of occupants have been Ecuadorian, though there have been a few Colombians. They are most likely to reach the shelter with the help of National Police in Ecuador, and are brought from places such as Santa Domingo de los Colorados and Manabi. Typically they stay at the shelter for the designated time of 3 months. Officials at Nuestros Jovenes described the difficulties of reintegration, the challenges of privacy, and the safety and security issues surrounding the victims. They also noted they have a difficult time convincing victims to stay at the shelter.

Riobamba Outreach & Trafficking in Persons

¶4. (U) On August 2, the interns teamed up with faculty from the University of San Francisco, Quito, to deliver a presentation on human trafficking to members of five different indigenous communities at Casa Condor Community Center in Riobamba. The group included approximately 40 community leaders and youth from the Chimborazo plains region of Riobamba. The interns initiated the discussion using an embassy presentation about the social, economic and community impact of the problem. They talked about the difference between illegal migration and trafficking in persons, along with ways to prevent the victimization of community members. The seminar also focused on the specific efforts of the governments of Ecuador and the United States in the fight against human trafficking.

¶5. (U) The interns then participated in an education health session

with about 20 indigenous youth to talk briefly about trafficking in persons. The presentation and visit were well-received by all members of the community and by the University of San Francisco officials.

¶6. (U) Comment: The highlight of the trip was the visit to indigenous communities in one of the poorest areas of Chimborazo. At Casa Condor, the young people and community leaders were very receptive to the TIP presentation, but efforts at interaction were limited in a large-group setting. When interns approached community members individually after the presentation, it was much easier to gain people's confidence. Two of the community leaders even contacted interns a week later to request future TIP presentations to larger audiences. The interns' outreach project helped the Mission in its fight against global TIP, developed deeper ties with the Chimborazo region, and helped the interns to understand the aims of public diplomacy. End comment.